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STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES OR REGIONS

International cooperation and assistance to alleviate the consequences of war in Croatia and to facilitate its recovery

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/204 of 21 December 1993, entitled "International cooperation and assistance to alleviate the consequences of war in Croatia and to facilitate its recovery". In that resolution the General Assembly, noting the continuous efforts of the Government of Croatia to solve the problems of post-war reconstruction and, at the same time, to solve the existing problems of refugees, displaced persons and victims of war within Croatia, and recognizing the importance of the United Nations overall humanitarian effort in Croatia, in particular its involvement in specific actions aimed at transforming humanitarian relief into longer-term development projects, reaffirmed its appeal to all States, regional, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other relevant bodies to provide cooperation in various forms and special and other assistance, in particular in the most severely affected areas and with a view to facilitating the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to those areas.

2. The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General, taking into account the circumstances in the region, to carry out, in cooperation with the Government of Croatia, an assessment of needs for the rehabilitation, reconstruction and development of Croatia and to launch, if appropriate, an international appeal for the funding of a programme for rehabilitation, reconstruction and development.

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3. On 11 May 1994, the United Nations launched a revised consolidated inter-agency appeal for the former Yugoslavia for the period from July to December 1994. In the foreword by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the High Commissioner for Refugees the appeal foresaw continued need for relief assistance but in circumstances where positive developments allowed a shift from dependency to self-sufficiency. The appeal included requests for funding for programmes to be executed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Volunteers (UNV), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) in all the republics of the former Yugoslavia. The United Nations Inter-agency Working Group met on 20 July at Geneva to review the progress of the programmes and the funding status, and again in September 1994 to review the situation and prospects for 1995.

4. The appeal was based on the findings of an inter-agency mission undertaken in March 1994 and included a request for funding to assist the Government of Croatia in providing services to the refugees and displaced persons on its territory, which are estimated to number 637,000, including those in the United Nations Protected Areas. In addition, a total of over 375,000 Croatian citizens applied for assistance through the Croatian Ministry of Labour as at February 1994. The appeal was revised on 1 September 1994 in view of significant changes that had taken place over the summer months. The revised appeal reflected a notable decrease in the number of beneficiaries (490,000) following a census conducted by the Government of Croatia. That population is receiving assistance mainly from the European Community Task Force and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

5. International assistance to Croatia is therefore aimed mainly at assisting with the basic needs of the large population of refugees and displaced persons as well as those affected by the economic effects of the war in the region. The full start of reconstruction and rehabilitation activities in many areas has been hampered by the lack of a comprehensive political solution to the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and, in particular, the situation in the United Nations Protected Areas in Croatia. However, as the foreword of the inter-agency appeal indicates, relief activities are being integrated into medium- and long-term developmental programmes, especially in the areas of health, sanitation, shelter, education, community services and other social needs.

6. In that context, the organizations of the United Nations system have developed, in cooperation with the Government of Croatia, several programmes aimed at rehabilitation, reconstruction and development.

7. UNDP has developed a project financed from indicative planning figure resources to enhance the aid coordination mechanisms of the Government, in order to integrate better the national and international reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts. The UNDP/Department for Development Support and Management Services formulation mission that developed the project proposal

reviewed, with the Croatian authorities, different components of a reconstruction and rehabilitation programme and identified areas for future projects.

8. In the United Nations Protected Area - Sector West, a UNDP/Department for Development Support and Management Services pilot project of social reconstruction is being carried out by the United Nations Office at Vienna. The objectives of the project are to ease social tensions in that war-torn region and to assist with the revitalization of socio-economic action schemes.

9. A programme for the socio-economic recovery for the southern Dalmatian coast, particularly the area around Dubrovnik, has been prepared and an investment promotion exercise, together with UNIDO, is under consideration.

10. UNIDO has been active in Croatia in the promotion of timber-frame housing construction and revival of the building industry in Vinkovci, Slavonski Brod and Virovitica, as well as prevention of industry pollution due to war damages.

11. The Department for Development Support and Management Services is now establishing a Reconstruction and Development Support Unit at the United Nations Office at Vienna. The Unit will implement social welfare programmes in areas of conflict, multisectoral pilot reconstruction projects and post-war economic recovery programmes. It will seek third-party resources to help finance those programmes.

12. The enhancement of the coordinating capacity of the Government of Croatia, supported by a United Nations mission to assess damages and needs for post-war reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes, will form the basis of a funding appeal to address the developmental needs of Croatia. It is clear, however, that the full implementation of rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes is closely linked to a successful conclusion of current efforts aimed at finding a comprehensive political settlement.